

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

Program Manual for Staff and Volunteers



THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP)

Program Manual for Staff and Volunteers

Prepared by:

Michigan Department of Education

Food Distribution Unit

608 W. Allegan

Lansing, Michigan 48933

Phone: (517)-373-8642- Fax: (517)-373-4022

Revised 10/2016

Table of Contents

Section 1: Program Information

- A.** Introduction
- B.** Outreach
- C.** Distributing USDA Foods
- D.** Food Storage, Handling, and Inventory Requirements
- E.** Receiving Deliveries
- F.** USDA Foods Complaints
- G.** Loss of USDA Foods
- H.** Disaster Planning
- I.** Pantries / Distribution Sites

Section 2: Intake Procedures

- A.** Signature Sheets
- B.** Proxy Forms
- C.** Income Eligibility
- D.** Documentation
- E.** Residency

Section 3: Civil Rights

- A.** Requirements
- B.** Training
- C.** Confidentiality
- D.** Civil Rights Complaints
- E.** American Disabilities Act

Section 4: TEFAP Terms to Know

Section 5: Acknowledgement Statement

Section 1: Program Information

Thank you for pursuing membership with us and thereby electing to participate as a TEFAP partner with **(Name of Agency)** to help meet food related needs in your community.

A. Introduction

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income men, women, and children in your community by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. Through TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchases USDA Foods, including processing and packaging, and makes it available to agencies for distribution.

The following pages contain guidance and expectations regarding TEFAP and the handling and distribution of USDA Foods. Please read the information and discuss any topics or questions with your immediate supervisor as needed.

B. Outreach

It is the responsibility of the agency to conduct appropriate outreach activities within its service area and provide information that includes the site's name, address, distribution dates, and hours of operation. Posters, pamphlets, and public service announcements, including newsletters, can be used to make potential participants aware of the availability of donated food. Word-of-mouth should not be the only method of public outreach.

The distribution of USDA Foods shall not be used as a means for furthering the political interest of any individual or party. Information unrelated to TEFAP may not be placed in or printed on TEFAP bags or boxes unless it's to educate participants about other government-sponsored programs.

C. Distributing USDA Foods

Food products may be pre-bagged/boxed or made available to participants through a client choice procedure. With client choice, participants may choose to decline food that will not be consumed by the household in a timely manner. Please remember that the intent of this program is not to provide nutritionally balanced blends of food but should rather be viewed as a supplement to other food sources. Efforts should be made to educate clients about how to combine other foods to create nutritious meals, and in turn, reduce food waste.

TEFAP USDA Foods shall only be distributed as part of the TEFAP program. No USDA Foods available through TEFAP shall be sold or otherwise disposed of in commercial channels in any form. Volunteers may not take TEFAP foods unless they are income eligible.

USDA Foods are distributed based on the size of the household – a larger household gets more food:

- 1-4 family members: 1 package

- 5-8 family members: 2 packages
- 9-12 family members: 3 packages

D. Food Storage, Handling, and Inventory Requirements

Local distribution agencies are discouraged from maintaining more than a three month supply of USDA Foods. This is a USDA expectation to help ensure all warehoused food are kept in good condition. Food banks and food pantries must maintain a warehouse where USDA Foods are held until product is delivered or picked up.

Storage facilities must be licensed, clean, climate controlled, secure from theft, and provide adequate storage for USDA foods as described below:

1. Dry USDA Foods must be stored as follows:
 - a. In a cool, dry area between 50 and 70 degrees and be kept out of direct sunlight
 - b. At least 6 inches off the floor and 4 inches away from the wall
 - c. Unless shrink wrapped, no more than three pallets high to avoid tipping and damage to food
 - d. No less than two feet from the ceiling to avoid higher temperatures and away from any water, heat, or steam sources.
2. Refrigerated USDA Foods must be stored as follows:
 - a. Between 36 and 40 degrees (F)
 - b. Stored with proper air circulation
 - c. In a refrigeration unit that is cleaned and inspected regularly
3. Frozen USDA Foods must be stored as follows:
 - a. In a freezer registering 0 degrees (F) or lower
 - b. Stored with proper air circulation
 - c. In a freezer unit that is cleaned and inspected regularly
4. Proper warehousing and storage of USDA Foods are as follows:
 - a. Inspect all USDA Foods upon arrival from the distributor
 - b. Check deliveries for shortage/damage before accepted
 - c. Do not accept damaged products
 - d. Examine temperature of refrigerated products
 - e. Examine canned foods for damaged, disfigured, or discolored items
 - f. Inspect items subject to infestation
 - g. Follow first in/first out (FIFO) inventory management
 - h. Inspect the condition of warehoused products on a regular basis
 - i. Foods found "out of condition" must be segregated from other foods
 - j. The disposal of "out of condition" foods must be approved by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE)
 - k. Take pictures of damaged or out of condition product to document and share with MDE and USDA.

E. Receiving Deliveries

Vendors and their dispatchers make delivery appointments no later than 24 hours before the anticipated delivery. Before scheduling a delivery appointment, warehouse staff must verify that the USDA Food belongs to that warehouse with a WBSCM generated Advanced Shipment Notification (ASN). It is the responsibility of the warehouse manager to ensure space is available for incoming scheduled deliveries.

Check amounts accurately when receiving product from warehouses. Count cases, not skids, as the number of cases per skid may vary based on the agency's order, the packer, or for other reasons. Please remember that the USDA FNS requires all shipments to be receipted in WBSCM within **two (2) calendar days** of delivery in order to meet contractual requirements.

F. USDA Foods Complaints

If you have a complaint regarding USDA Foods, please submit the USDA Foods Complaint Form to **(Name of Agency)**. If you are concerned that the quality of the TEFAP food poses an immediate health danger, please contact your lead agency with the name of food, the lot number, the package date, the date shipped to your agency, and the condition of the product for immediate investigation. Take and send pictures of USD food that is the subject of the submitted complaint.

Loss of USDA Foods

Occasionally, products may arrive damaged or become damaged at your facility. In these instances, please complete a USDA - Disposal Authorization form immediately and submit to your agency lead staff. Isolate the affected food if it poses a hazard to other food in good condition. Do not dispose of product until you have received instructions from your agency or the MDE. Please follow all local health department regulations when disposing of any hazardous food. Take and send pictures of USDA food that is damaged.

H. Disaster Planning

TEFAP requirements are not to be waived or modified by the pantry in the event of a natural disaster. Any variations from normal distribution must come from the Federal level in the event of such emergency. TEFAP foods may not be distributed as part of a disaster food distribution without permission from the Federal level. **(Name of Agency)** will notify food distribution sites and pantries if the distribution method is to vary during a disaster.

I. Pantries and Distribution Sites

Pantries will be notified in advance by email of their quarterly and/or monthly delivery time. Delivery notice will include a list of foods to be delivered and the quantity of foods. At times substitutions may be made depending on availability of certain foods. **(Name of Agency)** will make every effort to notify sites of changes in advance. Sites must provide staff or volunteers to unload food, take inventory and sign for food, and send copies of delivery sheets to **(Name of Agency)**.

(Name of Agency) is required to conduct monitoring visits of pantries and distribution sites through regularly scheduled, announced, and documented visits. **(Name of Agency)** staff will provide sites with reasonable notice of the visit and information on the scope of the on-site evaluation. These visits offer opportunities for staff and volunteers to provide feedback on TEFAP product acceptability, distribution procedures and suggestions for improvement. **(Name of Agency)** may also conduct unannounced visits, as needed.

Section 2: Intake Procedures

A. Signature Sheets

Your agency must maintain accurate records of TEFAP distribution through client self-declaration signatures. Each client must sign the signature sheet at the time the food box is received. This serves as both a declaration that they are within the income guidelines and documents the receipt of USDA Foods. Failure to complete and maintain signature sheets in a timely manner can result in suspension of access to TEFAP foods.

Throughout this process, confidentiality of client information must be strictly observed. This means no discussion of client's identities or other personal information outside of job-related needs.

B. Proxy Forms

In the event that a participant cannot pick up their TEFAP food package, a proxy may do so in their place. Proxy forms must be current and fully completed. Approved methods to allow a proxy to pick up food for another person include the following:

- Present identification and a signed note or proxy form from the participant; or
- Previously designated proxy with identification; or

- Presenter completes signature sheet with participant's name followed by the word "proxy."

C. Income Eligibility

Clients are eligible for TEFAP USDA Foods based on current household income guidelines. Income guidelines are set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and are subject to change annually. Your organization will distribute new guidelines to distribution sites as they become available.

Current income is determined by the income received by all members of the household during the month prior to application. For the purposes of TEFAP, a "household" is defined as a single individual or a group of related or unrelated individuals who are living as one economic unit and purchase and prepare food together.

Applicants are automatically eligible for TEFAP foods if they participate in the following programs:

- Michigan's Food Assistance Program (FAP); or
- Family Independence Program (FIP); or
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) for those 60 years of age or older.

D. Documentation

TEFAP regulations do not allow agencies to collect income documentation from program participants. Instead, individuals and families establish their eligibility for annual enrollment thorough self-declaration of income that requires a signature declaring that they are in need of food and live in a household where the income falls at or below the posted federal poverty guidelines. If the agency collects income information for other services and/or programs, forms must identify the information as "not required for TEFAP participation" or "optional."

Social Security numbers **may not** be collected as part of the TEFAP eligibility screening, in compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974.

E. Residency

Participants must reside in the State of Michigan for at least one day in the geographic area assigned to the distributing agency. Those who live outside of the agency's serving area **may** be served if the agency has sufficient product, but the client should be advised of the correct location for future reference.

If any program participant lacks documentation of identity or residence, the distribution site may indicate "NONE" in the address section of the signature sheet. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to refer any homeless or disabled person to local social services agencies which may assist the individual with obtaining identification or other needed services.

Section 3: Civil Rights

A. Requirements

TEFAP is open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability.

The current USDA nondiscrimination statement must be included, in full, on certification and declaration documents and where it fits on other materials. The shortened version may be used on materials where the longer version does not fit. However, it must be in font size no smaller than the font used on the document. The nondiscrimination statement must be on all published materials regarding the program. Your organization will provide you with the current nondiscrimination statement as part of your training.

An "And Justice for All" poster, Form AD-475C, must be prominently displayed at all sites during certification and USDA Food distribution. Posters are available free of charge from the USDA website or by request from MDE.

B. Training

Civil Rights training must be completed **and documented** each year for all agency staff and volunteers that interact with program participants.

C. Confidentiality

When working with program participants, confidentiality of client information must be strictly observed. This means no discussion of client's identities or other personal information outside of job-related needs.

D. Civil Rights Complaints

Civil Rights Complaints - Those wishing to file a Civil Rights discrimination complaint of can do so here: [USDA government Compliant](https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer) (<https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>) or at any USDA office, or by calling (866)632-9992 to request the form.

E. American Disabilities Act

American Disabilities Act (ADA) – Under Title III, no individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability with regards to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, or accommodations. More information about the ADA can be found here: [American with Disabilities government publications](https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm) (<https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm>).

Section 4: TEFAP Terms to Know

Agency: This is the organization that oversees your site's involvement in TEFAP.

American Disabilities Act: Under Title III of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) it states that no individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability with regards to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, or accommodations. More information about the ADA can be found here: [Americans with disabilities government publications \(https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm\)](https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm) .

Civil Rights: The basic rights that all people have. All people are to be treated in a kind, courteous manner that guarantees they receive the same level of treatment and service as anyone else.

Commodities: Food distributed by USDA programs, including TEFAP. The terms "USDA Foods" and "commodities" are interchangeable.

Confidentiality: The expectation that personal participant or agency information is kept private and not to be used or shared outside of your work with TEFAP.

Distribution: Handing out USDA food to participants. This requires documentation of the food reaching the intended participants.

Fiscal Year (FY): Twelve (12) month time period used for accounting and reporting purposes. The fiscal year for TEFAP is October 1 – September 30.

FIFO: An inventory control practice that means "first in, first out". Following this practice helps to ensure that food is distributed in a manner that provides fresh product to participants and helps eliminate spoilage and waste.

Food Bank: A non-profit organization that distributes USDA Foods as well as privately donated food within a designated service area. Food banks cannot require membership of any kind to receive USDA Foods.

Food Pantry: A non-profit organization that provides donated food in sufficient variety and quantity to those in need. A pantry must maintain regularly scheduled hours and shall have both food and non-food items available for continual distribution.

Household: A participant or group of participants. Participants can be related or non-related but are considered a household if they purchase and prepare food together. This term is the measuring unit for amount of distribution (for example: "130 households served").

Income: This includes all types of funding a participant may receive. While there are many types of income, it is important to remember that TEFAP does not allow the requirement or collection of participant income information.

Income Guidelines: Annual information that determines appropriate levels of income by the size of household. This information is used to determine if a participant qualifies for TEFAP.

Monitoring Visits: These are regular review visits from either Agency or State levels. Sites are observed to ensure distribution policies and procedures are being followed.

Nondiscrimination Statement: The written description of the protection of all people in regards to their rights. It lists protected groups and describes how to file a complaint if rights are violated.

Outreach: An activity of providing services to populations who might not otherwise have access to those services.

Participant: A person or group of persons that enroll in TEFAP. A participant is sometimes referred to as a recipient.

Proxy: Someone who has officially been given permission in writing to pick up TEFAP food on behalf of another participant. This is commonly used by seniors to allow others to pick up food on their behalf.

Self-declaration: A statement that shows a participant understands that they need to meet income requirements to be eligible to take part in TEFAP. This places the responsibility for accuracy on the participant and removes verification responsibility from staff and volunteers.

Signature Sheet: The sheet that participants sign to declare they meet TEFAP income requirements and to show that they received TEFAP food.

Section 3

Acknowledgement Statement (To be filed)

My signature below indicates that I have received and understand the information included in the **(Name of Agency)** TEFAP Manual for Pantries and Distribution Sites and my agreement to abide by the rules and policies of **(Name of Agency)**.

Signature

Date